

# *Julia Morgan's Architecture*



Merrill Hall built 1928

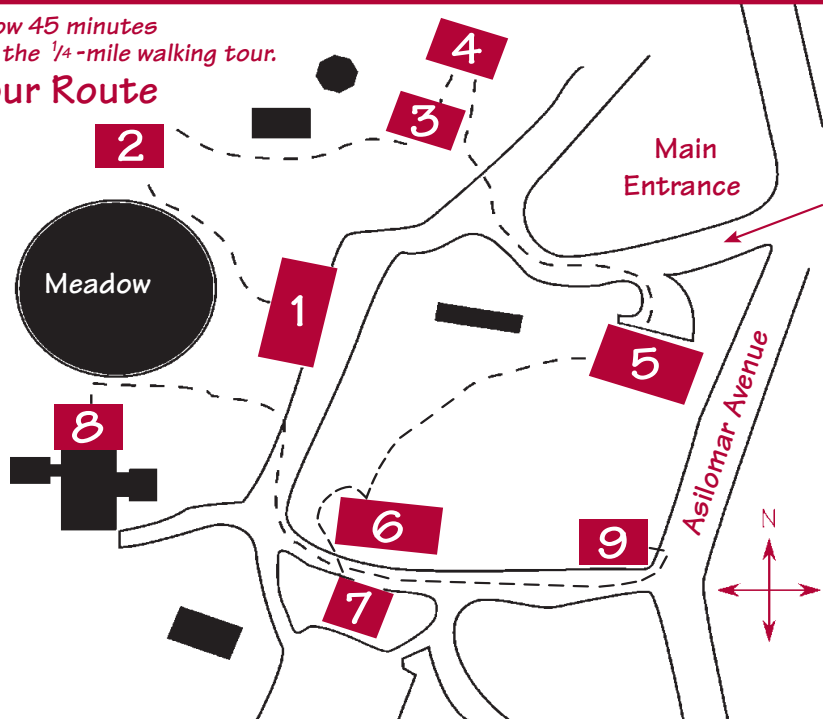
*Discover Asilomar*  
  
Self-guided walking tour

Asilomar State Beach & Conference Grounds



Allow 45 minutes  
for the 1/4-mile walking tour.

## Tour Route



Asilomar represents the largest collection of Julia Morgan's arts and crafts architecture in one location. The remaining structures (listed below) are a National Historic Landmark and on the National Register of Historic Places.

- Stone pillars at the entrance – 1913
- Phoebe Apperson Hearst Social Hall – 1913
- Engineer's Cottage – 1913
- Grace H. Dodge Chapel Auditorium – 1915
- Mary Ann Crocker Dining Hall – 1918
- Stuck-Up Inn – 1918
- Health Cottage (Viewpoint) – 1917-1918
- Visitor's Lodge – 1917-1918
- Pirates' Den – 1923
- Director's Cottage – 1927
- Scripps Lodge Annex – 1927-1928
- Merrill Hall – 1928

Your tour begins at the Phoebe Apperson Hearst Social Hall and winds through the grounds along walking paths and roadways. Refer to the map for your bearings. The buildings are in use today for lodging, meetings, and offices. Please do not enter rooms that are occupied.

As you proceed with your tour, notice the beauty of the Arts & Crafts style lies mainly in its simplicity and harmony with the surroundings. The buildings flow in rhythm with their placement, becoming part of the natural environment.



## *1. Phoebe Apperson Hearst Social Hall*



As you enter through the wide swinging doors, a sense of space and simple grandeur is immediate. This is primarily achieved by the open ceiling with exposed triangular wood trusses.

The large stones in the imposing fireplace naturally draw your eye to this centerpiece. The mortar is set deep, in between the stones, giving it the appearance of stacked rocks. Outside, on the chimney stack, stones are set perpendicular to create “art” to the rock arrangement.

## *2. Grace H. Dodge Chapel Auditorium*

The Chapel's beauty is enhanced by its versatility. Built to serve multiple purposes, the interior has folding wood partitions that close off a portion of the auditorium which the YWCA used as classrooms. This is an example of harmonizing function and form.



A vast picture window overlooks the forested dunes, bringing the inspiration of nature into the room. The wood floor is purposely slanted to give one a sense of sitting on a sand dune looking westerly to the Pacific.

## *3. Visitor's Lodge*

Miss Morgan deliberately designed the Lodge in the style of a fine hotel to accommodate the YWCA's executive members.

This building sits above the social hall, auditorium, and dining hall so from the living room executive



members had a commanding view of their "domain." The rich redwood tones and graceful simplicity of the grand staircase dominate the living room. The staircase railings match the battens on the walls, conveying a vertical design to the interior. Upstairs, an open gallery landing lends airiness to an otherwise confining space.



## 4. Scripps' Lodge Annex

Here, the entry hall is as long as the building is wide, giving a sense of proportion and balance. Gentle curved brackets soften and counterbalance the room's angles as seen in the French doors and library shelves. A built-in bench provides seating at the window.

The staircase is hidden, tucked away in the hallway, which is in contrast to the Visitor's Lodge (site 3) where the staircase is the centerpiece.



## 5. Stuck-Up Inn

Affectionately known as Stuck-Up Inn (see hallway exhibit for the story), this building was staff quarters, so the emphasis was on economy and practicality.

Morgan used brick in place of stone for the fireplace; debarked logs replaced redwood for the building trusses. In the tradition of the Arts & Crafts style, much of the furniture, such as bookcases and storage units, was built-in, making a room furnished without furniture. Built-in window seats, a subtle feature, provided a place of respite close to nature.



## 6. Merrill Hall

Julia Morgan's first intention was to build an outdoor amphitheater on this site. This proved impractical for a meeting area with the constant wet, foggy summers. So instead, Morgan designed this auditorium hall spacious enough to hold over 800 people. When it was completed in 1928, the YWCA declared, "It rivals the ballroom of the Del Monte Hotel in Monterey."

The fortress-like flagstone walls and chimney on the west side endures the relentless ocean winds and reflects the golden hues of sunset. Tall pines help blend the building into the landscape as it emerges onto the hill.

Stately Gothic arch trusses inside the hall echo the arched window design around the building.



## 7. Pirates' Den

Pirates' Den housed the young male staff during the YWCA camp days (see exhibit within). As with Stuck-Up Inn, Morgan used debarked logs for trusses since economy for the staffing lodge was important. Morgan also wanted to add space and dimension to the small living room. She modified the roof with varied angles and pitches, thus increasing its proportions.

These strategies and techniques exemplify her inventiveness while adding to the craftsmanship of the building.



## 8. Mary Ann Crocker Dining Hall

The front dining hall is the only remaining aspect of Morgan's original design. The entryway and roof dormers add artistry and versatility to an otherwise plain rectangular structure.

The entry gives dimension while providing a place to gather before heading inside. The roof dormers add interest and proportion while bringing daylight inside which accentuates the interior redwood trusses. The rubblestone fireplaces, when viewed from the outside, connect the building with its surroundings.



## 9. Engineer's Cottage

Engineer's Cottage was Julia Morgan's home and office while she worked at Asilomar. Allowing Morgan to stay on grounds saved the YWCA the expense of a rental and office for her in Monterey.

When Morgan occupied the cottage, two bedrooms and a bath were on the left, a central living room, and a kitchen and working area were on the right. One can just image her craftsmen meeting Morgan at the side kitchen door, stepping inside for hot coffee, and reviewing the work plans that were spread out on a large table. Today, park visitors can stay overnight in the cottage. Copies of Morgan's drawings are framed on the wall, reminding you of Morgan's work at Asilomar.





*Asilomar YWCA Girl Reserves c. 1919*

## *The Dream Comes Alive*

In the spring of 1912, Mrs. Phoebe Apperson Hearst opened her estate in Pleasanton, California to the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) for their annual Leadership Conference. During this conference, Hearst championed the organization's desire to build a permanent west-coast facility to expand and promote their cause.

Wanting a central coast location for their new facility, the YWCA contacted the Pacific Improvement Company. The Company leased to the YWCA 30 acres on the outskirts of Pacific Grove. The company's stipulation was that \$35,000 of property improvements had to be made and a payment of \$1 per acre per annum. If the lease conditions were met for 10 years, the land would be deeded to the YWCA.

## *A Blending of Function and Form*

The YWCA hired San Francisco architect Julia Morgan. To reflect the YWCA's character and interests, Morgan embraced the Arts & Crafts style that was sweeping





YWCA women at the Asilomar train whistle stop c. 1918.  
A replica of the whistle stop can be seen at the intersection  
of Crocker and Sinex Avenues (1/2 block east of  
Asilomar's main entrance).

California at the time. This movement was a reaction to the toll industrialism took on the quality of life. Its goal was to bring people back in touch with nature, and thus restore balance, health, harmony, and happiness. The architectural style was aimed to restore craftsmanship and artistic form to all structures, from workplaces to homes.

Morgan was true to the California Arts & Crafts architectural style at Asilomar. Her buildings complemented the natural landscape and were made of redwood, concrete, and stone. Her designs of interior space were as expressive as the exterior. A fireplace, often the centerpiece of a room, gave credence to the ideal that the fireplace represented the structure's soul.

When Asilomar opened its door for the first time in July 1913, Morgan had completed the front entrance stone pillars, the Phoebe Apperson Hearst Social Hall, 10 tent houses, and erected a circus tent for the dining hall. As donations to the YWCA were received, Morgan continued adding more permanent buildings to the grounds. Julia Morgan completed sixteen structures at Asilomar, finishing her last building, Merrill Hall, in 1928.

# Julia Morgan

1872 - 1957

Born in San Francisco on January 20, 1872, Julia Morgan filled her life with admirable accomplishments. She graduated from UC Berkeley in 1894, with a degree in engineering. She then went to the L'Ecole de Beaux Arts in Paris, France, earning her certification at the age of 29. She was the first woman ever to be granted an architecture certificate from the Paris school. In 1902, Morgan returned to California, and took a draftsman position with architect John Galen Howard. She opened her own practice in 1904 in San Francisco.



Morgan's distinguished career spanned 49 years, during which she designed nearly 700 buildings. She adamantly believed that architecture is a visual art and her work should speak for itself. In 1951, Morgan closed her office and spent her retirement traveling with family to Europe and South America. She died at the age of 85 on February 2, 1957.

Leaving no apologia, Julia Morgan's legacy instead is the three-dimensional evidence of her innovative ideas and personal philosophy.



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